

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
July 29, 2004

Contact:      Gayle Shirley 444-2596  
                  Anastasia Burton 444-9538

**New Program Launched to Reduce Misuse  
of Montana Medicaid Services**

(HELENA)---Most of us can't imagine visiting our doctor 125 times in one year, or being seen in the emergency room 30 times for non-emergent situations. Yet, those scenarios are happening in Montana's health care community, driving up the cost of health care and overcrowding the already busy schedules of Medicaid providers.

On August 1st, a new care management and education program that targets people with a history of misusing the Montana Medicaid system begins. The Team Care Program will require a pre-identified group of Medicaid clients to enroll in the program and choose one primary care provider (PCP) and one pharmacy. All Team Care enrollees must also call a nurse advice line before accessing health care (even from their PCP), except in emergent care situations. Team Care clients will continue to receive the professional care they need, and a team to help them decide how, when, and where to access care.

"Team Care is about helping these clients get the right care at the right time at the right place," said Mary Angela Collins, Medicaid Managed Care Bureau Chief. "Clients will continue to get the professional care they need, as well as training to help them learn that it's not necessary to visit the emergency room to treat a cold."

Team Care is a pilot program and begins with an initial group of nearly 100 enrollees, which will expand to 300 by the end of the summer. Team Care clients are identified for enrollment by claims data analysis, DUR (Drug Utilization Review), or by medical health professional referrals. After one year, clients will either remain in the program or "graduate" back into standard Medicaid.

While other states have initiated similar measures for those who misuse the Medicaid program, Montana's Team Care program is unique because clients are required to call the free Nurse First Advice Line before seeking medical treatment under normal circumstances. The envisioned scope of the Team Care program also sets it apart from other states' programs.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, which administers the Montana Medicaid program, has shifted to a care management approach in recent years due to a significant increase in Medicaid enrollment and utilization. Provider requests also played a significant role in the design of the Team Care program. DPHHS anticipates that if Team Care clients only use services four times as much as similar Medicaid clients, the agency could save almost \$1 million annually.

McKesson Health Solutions operates the Nurse First Advice Line used in Team Care as well as the state's disease management programs, which started in January of this year.

"Montana Medicaid is at the forefront of implementing innovative care management programs that can reduce inappropriate medical use and improve care. Utilizing the Nurse First Advice Line can help decrease the improper use of already strained medical resources and generate financial savings for the State, while continuing to ensure quality care for beneficiaries" said Sandeep Wadhwa, M.D., vice president of Government Services, McKesson Health Solutions.

For more information about the Team Care program, please contact Tedd Weldon at the DPHHS Managed Care Bureau at (406) 444-1518 or email at [teweldon@state.mt.us](mailto:teweldon@state.mt.us).

-END-